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HOW WE ARE TO FULFILL OUR LORD'S COMMANDMENT,
"LOVE YOUR ENEMIES," IN A TIME OF WAR.

A SERMON,

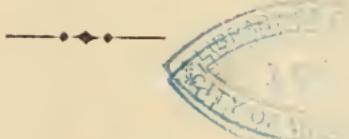
PREACHED IN

ALL SOULS' CHURCH, NEW YORK,

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BY

HENRY W. BELLOW S, D. D.



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S E R M O N.

“YE have heard that it hath been said, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy;’ but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you, that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust.”

MATT. v. 43—46.

OUR Religion ought never to be so profound a reality as when its principles are tried and tested by the severest necessities. There are those, I know, who think the faith of our Lord Jesus only credible in times of peace and quietude; in the closet and the church; that earnest business, public affairs, and, especially, the commotions of war, necessarily drive its doctrines and promises, its precepts and its temper, wholly out of men’s minds, and even make it almost absurd to name its sublime and pure and lovely truths as practical attainments! One of the great and permanent obstacles to the spread and influence of a genuine Christianity, is the widely-received fallacy that the principles of our faith are radically opposed to the rough necessities, the stern facts, the great public economies of the state and the world; and that while spiritual life, and the church, and the inner circle of thought and feeling may be governed and animated by Christian faith,—the world and its affairs, business, government, and public policy, must be given over to a baser inspiration, and conducted upon a far less elevated code of principles.

I deny these mischievous assertions; I confront these demoralizing fallacies. If Christianity is true anywhere, it is true everywhere; if it is obligatory in anything, it is obligatory in

everything. If it be suited to man in his highest wants, it is suited to him in all respects. Coming from God, the maker of man, and the author of man's circumstances and surroundings, it is intended to meet the wants of the very condition in which we are now living. If this be an imperfect condition, a condition far short of our ideal, an unfolding, a disciplinary and an educational condition, of mixed good and evil, of necessary collision and conflict, Christianity is fitted to these very facts; and where the discipline and education, the collision and conflict are going on most intensely, there our Religion is most in place, and will show itself most true, most practical, most holy, and most self-establishing.

How, for instance, could the great doctrine of our text, "Love your enemies," be tested and tried, if we *had* no enemies? And yet, there are those who deride Christianity, because it asks us to love our enemies! as if that were a thing in itself possible only when we no longer had any. It is very well to talk about loving your enemies, is the secret thought of many, so long as you have none, or they are not doing you mischief, or you are so vastly their superior in every kind of force that you are not afraid of them. But how are you to love enemies who are imperiling your children's life, the safety of your wives and daughters, spoiling your goods, and endangering the very fabric of that government under which all your hopes of a safe and peaceful old age, or a quiet burying-place, are sheltered? I answer, that a Religion that taught us to love only the weak, the harmless, or those we could treat with lenity and gentleness, would be a Religion without dignity or elevation, and no improvement upon any heathen code! The triumph of Christian love is shown in being able to extinguish personal vindictiveness and revenge, even towards those who do us gross and cruel wrongs, and whom the necessities of civil and social existence oblige us to punish even with violence and death. The Gospel bids us love the criminal in his cell, the murderer on the gallows, the enemy at our throat—to love him by remembering that he is still a man, a child of God—a deluded, a pitiable, a forgivable brother man—a being to be spared all needless suffering, all vindictive feelings, all revengeful treatment. But it does not bid us release the enemy of society, and set him loose upon his innocent brothers; nor to allow the hand of force and violence to go on unrestrained to harm the weak and

the worthy ; nor to permit the lawless to do his bloody work against us unopposed, as if resistance to an enemy were an unfraternal, an unkind, and an unloving act ! Far from it. We may love, and bless, and do good, and pray for those whom it is our duty to resist, to kill, and to hang, as enemies not of us only, but also of the public peace and the interests of social and religious life for ages to come.

If the present strife in our beloved country does not illustrate the superior Christianity of the States uncursed with that unchristian and demoralizing institution—the source of all our woe—called Human Slavery—then, indeed, it would be a matter of small consequence to posterity which side in this quarrel came off victor. I venture to predict, however, that the great, new, and noble feature in this strife, is to be the impersonal, the high-principled, the humane and Christian temper, in which the war is urged on our side ; and the sad feature, the vindictive bitterness, the personal revenge, the inhuman and savage temper, in which it is carried on upon the other, by those maddened and drunken and degraded by one hundred years of slaveholding. I make all personal exceptions in this estimate. I will admit ten and a hundred thousand exceptions to it, if candor and impartiality require it. But I say, the holding, for generations, of human beings in slavery, ought to produce, and will produce, and has produced a civilization in which the first principles of ethics are perverted, the natural conscience defiled ; in which Christianity becomes impossible, except in a mongrel form ; and where violence, rapine, idleness, drunkenness, lust, and cruelty must, and do, work themselves into the very life of the people, and are sure to characterize, alike, their conduct in peace and in war. This war, on the other side, is a war waged for Human Bondage and Belial. We, on the contrary, must prove to the world that we are waging this war for Christ, and in the spirit of Christ ; not against our brethren, not against Christian principles ;—without passion or vindictiveness ; in deepest sorrow, and with sincerest pity for those we are compelled to resist and punish ; but with a vigor, a thoroughness, and a decisive determination, which a sense of the magnitude and radical importance of the humane interests at stake not only justifies, but makes our bounden and earnest duty. I declare from the bottom of my heart, and God knows I speak the truth, I feel a tender, and sad, and anguished pity for the men whom the sub-

tle poison of ambition, the slow but sure workings of that unhallowed institution of Slavery, the long and sweet monopoly of political power and place—have, perhaps almost unconsciously to themselves, converted into conspirators against the life of the Nation. I know the genius, and the personal and private worth of some among them—the genuine errors of judgment, the local illusions, the plausible fallacies, under which many hold those treasonable opinions and shield their fatal doings. Who can have personally known many of them without now entertaining feelings of deepest commiseration for their delusions, mental and moral ; and who can contemplate their probable fate without the profoundest pity and sorrow ? Not Lucifer, leading off the third part of heaven, is more sadly to be mourned, than the leaders of this frightful rebellion. “God forgive them,” we may exclaim, with our Lord, respecting his own murderers ; “they know not what they do !” Immersed in the insidious atmosphere of an institution that corrupts all the judgments of men—whose terrible malaria has demented the religious guides of the whole territory over which it is spread—right and wrong are almost interchangeable distinctions there, and “Evil, be thou my good,” has become the brazen motto of the very pulpit of that land ! What but forgiveness, pity, and prayers for mercy, are due in respect of those who have found themselves powerless to resist a perversion so mighty, so penetrating, so over-mastering ? That terrible enchantress, Chattel Slavery,—that Gorgon’s head, with whips for hair,—rises from those fair Southern fields, mightier than the Sphynx buried in Egyptian sands, and seems to blast not only the civilization and industry of the region around, until it threatens to become another Egypt without its Nile, but, worse than that, it steals away the heart and conscience of its denizens, turns to stone the patriotism and the moral sense of its great upholders, and leaves them ready to die in defence of a frightful inhumanity, and a wrong that saps their own liberty and life, while threatening those of the whole nation. So sad, so dark, so fatal a delusion, never before visited a civilized people. If it were possible to open their eyes with any argument but the sword—could entreaty, forbearance, long-suffering, and forgiveness of injuries have availed—how long ago had they changed their minds and been converted ? But with those who, once having acknowledged the sin and the shame of Slavery,

have, in the very face and eyes of a universal sentiment to the contrary all over the civilized world, come now to pronounce it a blessing and a Divine institution, a glory and a profit—the black key-stone of the arch of liberty; with those who have recalled every concession they once made to liberty; who first laid down against our will a line that limited our freedom, and then, when it had become valuable and dear to us in our despair, as a line that limited their slavery, rubbed it out, equally against our will, and then made claim to the free and unpolluted territories of the land as the rightful home of their accursed Domestic Tyranny; to those who thus show themselves the grand disputers of modern civilization, the armed enemies of humanity, the representatives of feudalism in the home of liberty, a nation of Canutes, bidding the tide of morality and religion back to its sacred source in the will of God! —to such a people, what has Christianity, what civilization, what humanity to oppose when they defy government, usurp authority, steal public property, and assail with arms, and with subtle tongues in foreign Cabinets, our national existence—but all the powers of resistance, which God and Nature, which Civilization and Humanity have put at our disposal?

But, thus feeling and thus speaking, do we transgress the requirements of our holy faith? Do we necessarily hate those whom we must violently oppose? Are we transgressors of the law of love to our enemies, because we cannot, must not, will not yield to their wicked and terrible will? Are we unchristian, savage, ferocious, because we roll out our artillery, and shoulder our muskets, and buckle on our swords to defend our Capital, our Constitution, and our Laws? No!—a thousand times, No! We love them still! For we would bless them, receive them back, aid them to escape from these self-imposed sufferings, would they permit it. Nor, perhaps, ever, since the world began, was there so little desire to inflict vindictive and personal damage on a formidable foe as here and now. If our Southern brethren (enemies though they be) knew the sorrow that fills all thoughtful Northern hearts, in view of the terrible necessity God's providence imposes upon us—if they knew how we smite to heal, and resist to bless, and kill to make alive—how we love the very States we may be compelled to crush—and pity and would cherish the very people we may be forced to exterminate—they would dread, even more than they

now do, the righteous indignation, the Divine vengeance embodied in our loyal arm. What Attila boasted profanely of being—the scourge of God—the Christian world will finally acknowledge these loyal States, in their slow, patient, but deep-seated and solemn wrath, to be. The scourge of God ! It is the holy anger of Heaven that is to be let loose in these gathering thunders ! It is the voice of outraged humanity that is to speak in those hoarse cannon ! It is the sacred sword of Justice that is now bare ; and Liberty looks for approval to the eye of heavenly truth and pity, before she strikes the blow which in her pitying heart she shudders to inflict.

Oh, no ! Characteristically considered, there is no vain ambition, no barbarous love of war, no thirst for military glory, in the solemn call which is mustering our army ! We have stood patiently at our looms and in our furrows, behind our counters and in our studies, while the deluded enemy of liberty and order and law was hacking away at all the joints and members of the State, and foreign ministers, and strangers from other lands, and public presses in England and France, were pointing scornful fingers at us and our government, as though now the old sneers and doubts with which our Great Experiment has been secretly met in all imperial directions were safely to be turned into the boldest exultations ! Our moderation has been taken for apathy ; our hatred of blood, for cowardice ; our unarmed and peaceful civilization, for want of vigor and ability to defend ourselves ; our pity for our foes, and forgiveness of our injuries, for a culpable indifference to national indignity and wrong. “The Great Republic is fallen forever, and there can never be another,” says France. The Confederate and the United States are equals in the eye of England, says, with a pretence at neutrality, the mistaken cabinet of Great Britain. But, with something of the stillness and patience with which the corn-rows are now springing in the Western prairies and the Eastern meadows—with something of the calm dignity with which the insulted laws of nature avenge their wrongs—with much of the meekness of the elements, that gather up their affronted forces with noiseless and unthreatening energy—so have risen in gentle majesty, in patient strength, in mild and tearful energy, the mighty bands of freemen, who, with concurrent, united, intelligent, earnest and solemn purpose, now follow each other like the waves of the incoming

tide, and begin to swell and break upon the line where rebellion, disloyalty, and tyranny threaten the existence of the nation and its liberties! Was ever a war more entitled to be called a Holy War? Was ever a national controversy so free from doubt—so wholly wrong on one side, so wholly right on the other? Did passion, ambition, military ardor, or secondary causes of any kind, ever before have so little part in developing the strength and putting on the whole armor of a people? Peace societies may murmur as they will of the immorality of all war—of the unchristian character of this strife. I say, we have never had—no, not in the widest and most active seasons of religious excitement—such evidences of the influence of the Christian Religion, such proofs of the presence of Christ with his people, as we have now, in the humane, the just, the gentle, the impersonal temper, which animates our brave fellows in their consecration of body and soul to the protection and salvation of their country. If the very rudest and most dangerous portion of our army could control their vindictiveness at Alexandria, and not give up to fire and sack a place which had just smitten down with private malice their pride and joy, what may we not hope for and boast, when we anticipate what will be the conduct, bearing, and spirit of our farmers, our mechanics, our clerks, our own sons and brothers, in this strife? I expect a thousand pious Captain Vickers and prayerful Havellocks to spring up in the ranks! I believe that Cromwell's men had more fanaticism, but not more piety than thousands of ours. I believe that more humanity, more Christian benevolence, more deeds of disinterestedness, more holy pity, more earnest prayers and fraternal helpfulness, more that must adorn and encourage our love of country, and exalt us to our proper place in the esteem and love and confidence of the world—will spring up in the course of this war, blessed to us of God, and warranted and demanded of Christian duty and principle—than have flowed from the commercial, educational, and Christian industry and peace of our history for the whole five and twenty years past.

I feel bound, as a Christian minister, to say that I do not and cannot approve the tone in which too large a portion of the public press seeks to animate the courage and enterprise of our troops, by seizing on every doubtful case of inhumanity, or every adversity, such as the loss of poor Ellsworth, to exas-

perate the temper and arouse the ill-blood of our army. No can I believe that any attempts to fight fire with fire, barbarism with counter-barbarism, cruelty with greater cruelty, treachery with subtler treachery—will meet the just expectations of those on whom the Sacred War must depend for its main support. read, therefore, of all schemes of flooding the cities and plantations of the lower Mississippi, by opening the dykes and levees, with serious sorrow. I have more than doubts whether the seizure of the telegraphic despatches of the last year be a wise, a politic, a statesman-like course. Shall we not lose more by such a blow at the confidence hitherto reposed in the sacredness of these private dispatches, than we gain by the information thus wrested from our enemies ? How does it differ from the violation of the post-office and the seals of private letters ? It would be equally wrong and impolitic for the government not to respect the parole of our Texan officers, though given under compulsion. Let us leave indiscriminate slaughter, piracy, and desperate measures to desperate men. We have no occasion for them, and no excuse for using them. We can afford to be humane and scrupulous in honor, and we are bound to be so by the standard of our Christian civilization. While using every legitimate weapon, and sending an overwhelming force, and cutting off all supplies that directly minister to the strength of the enemy, we could be authorized only by the extreme law of the right of self-preservation to practice or encourage any lower methods than those recommended by the most exalted standards attained in the latest wars by the highest and most scrupulous nations, and are even bound to go beyond any other nation in humanity, as representing nationally a higher idea, and having a more sacred cause.

It is thus that we must love our enemies, and bless them that curse us ! We cannot spare them our blows ; for we have the holy cause of universal justice, and the common rights of humanity to defend and protect against them. But we can remember that they are men and brothers, though deluded ; we can remember that their innocent wives and children are tender like our own, and should have our pity and protection ; we can rid the contest of vindictiveness and personal hatred and malice—we can treat them as God treats us, who chastises and punishes, but not in anger ; as Christ treated Jerusalem ; who,

while he left it to the destruction it had justly invoked by its sins, wept over it, and would have given his life to save it, as he did give it to save the world.

Alas ! alas ! the baptism of blood ! so indispensable to the salvation of the world, that even God did not spare his own son, to secure the repentance and reformation of mankind. How often must it be repeated ? How many of the just and noble and innocent must continue to suffer for the guilty ? How many of our sons, like the heavenly Father's Child, must pour out their life-blood to save the country and redeem the race ? For war is not shedding the blood of enemies alone ; it is mixing with it the blood of friends. And let those who think only of the cruelty of assailing and destroying the enemy, think of the self-sacrifice, the magnanimity, the submission, and disinterestedness, required of those who risk their own lives, or freely give them, in defence of the nation ! Nay, let them think of those who give up what is more precious than life itself — that which they would gladly redeem with their own lives — their sons, brothers, husbands, and lovers, to fight this sad yet necessary battle. Oh ! if there be a need of forgiveness of enemies, is it not the forgiveness which these bleeding hearts are called on to extend towards those who have made this sacrifice necessary — those who have brought on this terrible conflict, and changed our peaceful, happy, home-blest North into a great camp of armed men ? We have, indeed, sore and urgent need to enter, at such a moment and under such trying circumstances, into the communion of our dying Saviour — to remember, that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins — to fix our eyes upon the sacrifice of our blessed Lord, and upon that love of God, which freely gave him up to the spear, and the gall, and the cross, for our sakes. We have need to look with him to the Almighty mercy, and say, as we cast our eyes upon our enemies, who have lifted us into this tremendous attitude of national suffering, " Father, forgive them ; they know not what they do." We have need to look beyond this transitory scene of partings, and as we see on the distant hills the tents where our dear ones await the onset of battle, to remember, that we are all only encamped for a season in this battle-field of life ; that we have no abiding place or continuing city, but are wayfarers, pilgrims to a better coun-

try,—soldiers under arms, whose Captain is in heaven, and who may at any moment be summoned to a distant, even an immortal rendezvous, and that there, we and our comrades, though parted now, shall all at last be sure to meet, if faithful to our duty and generous in our self-sacrifice, about His victorious throne, in the peaceful city of our God.



PRACTICAL HINTS FOR VOLUNTEERS.

1. In the first place, always recollect that in war a great many more men are disabled and die from disease than from injuries received in battle, and that the preservation of your health depends very much upon yourselves.

2. With regard to your food, you should endeavor to have your meals at frequent and regular intervals, as in civil life, and avoid eating in the meanwhile, unless the supply is scanty at the proper time. As a general rule, eat what you like best and what agrees with you best, and take as much good, wholesome food, as your system requires to keep it healthy, and vigorous.

3. Abstain from all kinds of spirituous liquors, for they predispose the system to disease, and those who use them are the most likely to get sick and die. Besides, it has been found that fatigue and exposure can be much better borne without than with them, and that tea and coffee answer a much better purpose in strengthening and protecting the system. A cheap and refreshing beverage may be readily made with water, vinegar, molasses, and ginger.

4. To further purify your system, and prevent colds, fevers, bowel-complaints, and other diseases, keep your body clean and skin active by frequent but short bathing, or dry frictions with coarse cloths. Rub yourself until you are warm all over. A sense of chilliness after bathing is to be overcome by hard rubbing and warm clothing.

5. If you can avoid it, never sit or lie down on the bare ground or exposed rock, but, if possible, always place thick cloths, blankets, dry straw, grass, leaves, wood, or something of the kind under you, as a protection.

6. To protect yourself from the rays of the sun, wear a thin, light covering over the head and neck. In the absence of the usual "Havelock," substitute some other suitable article of silk, woolen, cotton, straw, or even paper or leaves. Remain in the air as much as you can, but avoid all undue exposure to the sun, and keep your head cool and feet warm and dry.







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